Institut d'Histoire Sociale CGT de l'Ardèche
25 av. de la Gare
07000 PRIVAS cedex
Tel. 04 75 66 76 66
mail : ihscgt07@gmail.com

« Grèves révolutionnaires en France » — George Andreytchine

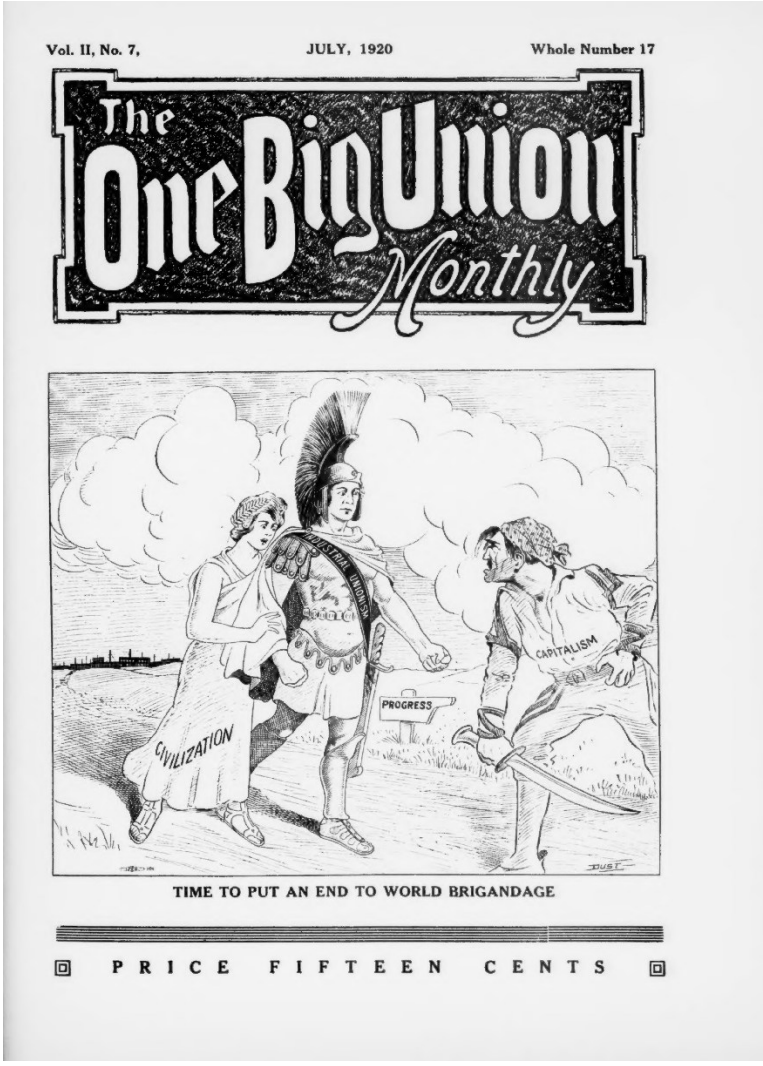
One Big Union Monthly, Vol. 2, n° 7, juillet 1920

The Final Conflict—the Workers' driving away the "Enemies of the People": capitalists, generals, clericals and politicians.
—From "La Vie Ouvriere."

Revolutionary Strikes in France

By GEORGE ANDREYTCHINE

« Grèves révolutionnaires en France » — George Andreytchine
One Big Union Monthly, Vol. 2, n° 7, juillet 1920



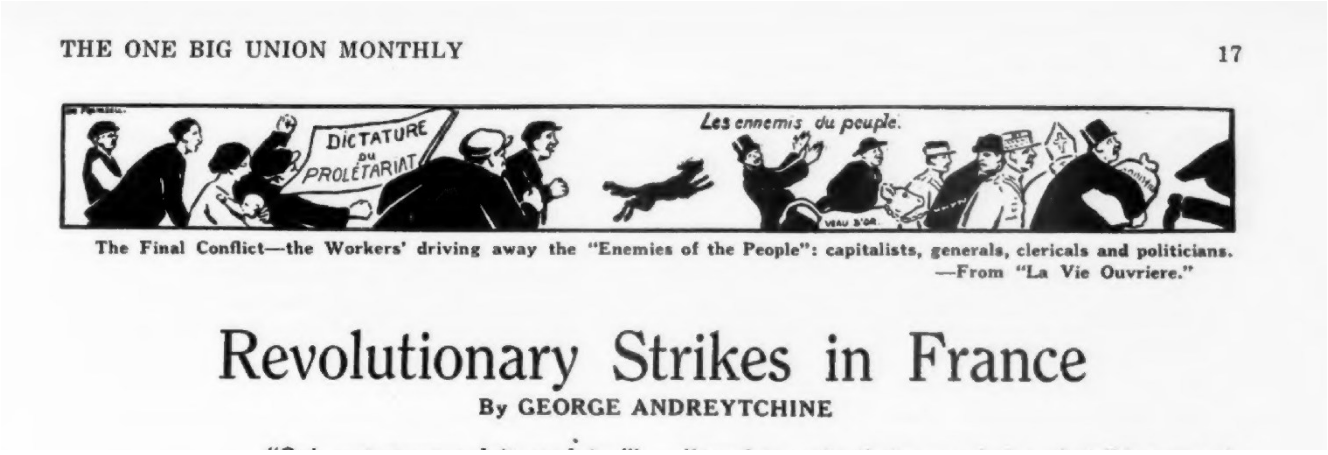
La présente traduction d'un article paru en juillet 1920 dans *One Big Union Monthly* — organe des Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.) publié à Chicago — offre un témoignage de première main sur les grandes grèves révolutionnaires qui secouèrent la France au lendemain de la Première Guerre mondiale. Son auteur, George Andreytchine, militant bulgaro-américain des I.W.W., y livre une analyse lucide et engagée des luttes intestines au sein de la C.G.T., de la montée en puissance du courant syndicaliste révolutionnaire dans la Fédération des cheminots, et de la vague répressive qui s'abattit sur ses principaux animateurs au printemps 1920.

Ce document revêt un intérêt particulier à plus d'un titre. Il témoigne d'abord de la vitalité d'un internationalisme prolétarien qui ne se réduisait pas à une posture rhétorique : des militants américains, bulgares, français et russes partageaient les mêmes analyses, se reconnaissaient dans les mêmes combats et suivaient avec une attention fraternelle les péripéties des luttes ouvrières à travers les frontières. La presse syndicale et socialiste internationale constituait alors un véritable espace commun de débat et de solidarité, bien avant l'ère des communications instantanées.

Il témoigne ensuite de l'intensité des débats qui traversaient le mouvement ouvrier français à cette période charnière : entre collaboration de classe et lutte des classes, entre réformisme et révolution, entre syndicalisme d'action directe et tutelle partisane. Ces débats, loin d'être révolus, résonnent encore dans l'histoire longue du mouvement syndical.

Enfin, et c'est peut-être ce qui nous touche le plus directement, ce texte met en lumière des figures militantes — Monatte, Monmousseau, Midol, Sirolle — dont l'engagement, la rigueur et le courage méritent d'être rappelés et transmis. C'est précisément la vocation de l'Institut d'histoire sociale C.G.T. de l'Ardèche que de contribuer à cette transmission : faire vivre la mémoire des luttes ouvrières, non comme un patrimoine figé, mais comme une ressource vivante pour comprendre le présent et nourrir l'action.

Institut d'histoire sociale C.G.T. de l'Ardèche


THE ONE BIG UNION MONTHLY 17

The Final Conflict—the Workers' driving away the "Enemies of the People": capitalists, generals, clericals and politicians.
—From "La Vie Ouvriere."

Revolutionary Strikes in France

By GEORGE ANDREYTCHINE

« Grèves révolutionnaires en France » — George Andreytchine

One Big Union Monthly, Vol. 2, n° 7, juillet 1920

« Qui veut manger doit produire ! »

PIERRE MONATTE,
Editor "La Vie Ouvriere"; born 1881.

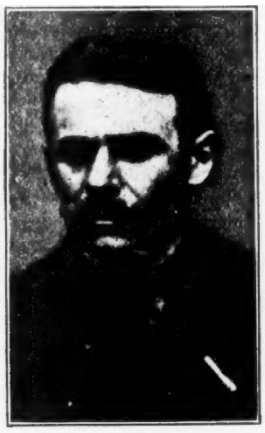
De grandes et héroïques journées viennent de s'écouler en France ; des journées au cours desquelles la volonté révolutionnaire de l'avant-garde du prolétariat a tenté de s'affirmer sans équivoque. Les syndicalistes révolutionnaires de la Fédération des travailleurs des chemins de fer ont appelé à une grève générale sur l'ensemble des lignes à la veille du 1er Mai. Les dockers, les marins et les mineurs se sont mis en grève par solidarité avec les militants « cheminots ». Par la suite, les travailleurs du gaz et de l'électricité, ainsi que les employés des tramways et du métro parisiens, furent appelés à cesser le travail par la Confédération générale du travail en soutien aux cheminots en grève. Les métallurgistes de Paris, à la base, firent également grève, ignorant les appels et supplications de leurs dirigeants conservateurs. À un certain moment, le pays se trouva confronté, çà et là, à des poussées insurrectionnelles spontanées.
Mais le moment n'était pas propice à une révolution, car les révolutions ne se décrètent pas par des comités exécutifs ou des militants syndicaux. Il est évident que les causes de cette grève n'étaient pas profondes ; elles n'étaient pas de nature élémentaire.

La lutte pour la suprématie au sein de la C.G.T.

Les dirigeants des cheminots savaient parfaitement qu'une révolution était impossible à ce moment précis. Ils déclenchèrent la grève davantage contre les dirigeants conservateurs de la Confédération générale du travail et de leur propre organisation que contre le régime capitaliste et son gouvernement. Ils espéraient susciter le sentiment nécessaire et la solidarité de classe, réveiller la combativité d'avant-guerre du prolétariat français et démolir la machine qui sape la volonté et l'énergie révolutionnaires de la classe ouvrière — Jouhaux, Dumoulin, Merrheim, Bidegaray et leurs associés.

Cette grève constituait un défi lancé à ces dirigeants. S'ils refusaient de la soutenir, ils étaient perdus ; s'ils la soutenaient pleinement, les syndicalistes révolutionnaires pouvaient la leur arracher et lui donner une nouvelle orientation, voire tenter une révolution. Mais les politiciens avisés de la C.G.T. ne

choisirent aucune de ces deux voies. Après avoir compris qu'il eût été suicidaire de s'opposer à ce cyclone, ils « sympathisèrent » à contrecœur avec la lutte des cheminots tout en les poignardant dans le dos. Les syndicats appelés à la grève « par solidarité » furent laissés libres de décider eux-mêmes s'ils participeraient ou non.



GASTON MONMOUSSEAU
leader of the Railroad militants.
Born in 1883.

Certains dirigeants des syndicats de cheminots allèrent jusqu'à jouer les briseurs de grève et menèrent une propagande insidieuse contre le nouveau « régime bolchevique » de leur fédération. Particulièrement notoires furent les dirigeants du réseau du Nord, qui levèrent la grève au moment précis où elle prenait une ampleur générale.

La consolidation des militants

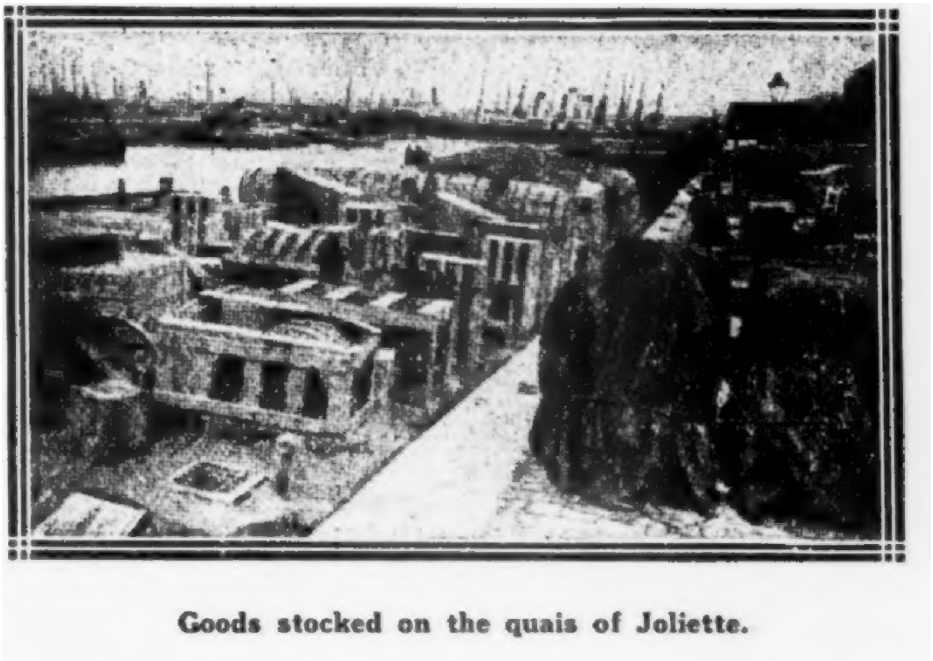
Pendant la guerre, comme dans tous les pays européens, la majorité des syndicalistes et des socialistes apporta son soutien et sa complicité aux capitalistes dans la grande boucherie. Mais dans chaque pays subsista une minorité incorruptible et courageuse qui refusa l'infâme « union sacrée » avec l'ennemi éternel de la classe ouvrière et maintint haut le drapeau rouge de l'Internationale ouvrière au-dessus des trahisons et des compromis odieux de la majorité.

En France, cette minorité se regroupa autour de notre vaillant camarade Pierre Monatte, rédacteur de la revue syndicaliste *La Vie ouvrière*. Tous les lecteurs de *One Big Union Monthly* connaissent déjà la pittoresque carrière révolutionnaire de Monatte. Les hommes et les femmes qui rejoignirent son groupe sont appelés à jouer un rôle important dans les événements futurs ; bien plus, ils ont été au cœur de la lutte contre le capitalisme pendant de nombreuses années et en ont porté le poids depuis l'armistice, lorsque le syndicalisme d'avant-guerre reprit sa fonction dans certains des syndicats les plus importants.

Les cheminots et les métallurgistes constituèrent le centre de toute l'action et de la propagande syndicalistes. Depuis la défection de Merrheim, le pèlerin zimmerwaldien, et de Dumoulin, l'homme qui avait impitoyablement démasqué et dénoncé Jouhaux et sa clique, le syndicat des cheminots devint l'arène d'une lutte à mort entre les deux tendances. Le groupe de Monatte fut renforcé par l'adhésion de plusieurs figures importantes exerçant une influence considérable dans cette industrie clé : Gaston Monmousseau, jeune et puissant orateur, écrivain et organisateur, figure de proue des révolutionnaires au sein du réseau ferroviaire de l'État ; Léon Midol, homme au caractère résolu et à la détermination sans faille, qui n'a cessé de harceler les compagnies ferroviaires et leur gouvernement par ses « grèves personnelles » (la « grève d'une minute » sur le P.L.M. en janvier 1919, et la grève ferroviaire de février 1920), éminent spécialiste des transports et de la production, secrétaire général du syndicat ferroviaire le plus important, celui de la ligne Paris-Lyon-Méditerranée ; Dejonckere, des lignes de l'État ; Delagrange et Olivier, des lignes Paris-Orléans ; Totti, du P.L.M. ; Lévêque, des lignes de l'État ; Chaverot, du P.L.M. Il convient également de mentionner l'anarchiste capable et intrépide Sirolle, très proche du groupe de Monatte.

Lutte de classe contre collaboration de classe

Ces militants syndicalistes œuvraient sans relâche pour le triomphe du principe de la lutte des classes, par opposition à la collaboration de classe pratiquée par les dirigeants de leur organisation générale et de la C.G.T. Lors du congrès de leur fédération en mai 1919, la motion révolutionnaire du camarade Monmousseau fut soutenue par 108 000 membres, contre 130 000 pour celle de Bidegaray, le secrétaire conservateur de la fédération.



Goods stocked on the quais of Joliette.

En juillet 1919, Bidegaray et les dirigeants de la C.G.T. sabotèrent la grève générale convoquée pour protester contre l'intervention en Russie et en Hongrie, ce qui fut considéré comme un acte de trahison par la « minorité », qui n'était pas disposée à laisser son gouvernement étrangler la révolution russe. La grève fut levée à la veille du 21 juillet ; la Hongrie fut envahie et l'intervention en Russie reçut une nouvelle impulsion. Mais cela sonna le glas du pouvoir de Bidegaray. La propagande menée contre lui et les autres traîtres à la cause sociale porta ses fruits. En février 1920, les travailleurs du réseau ferroviaire de l'État tinrent leur congrès. À une majorité écrasante de 57 047 voix, Monmousseau battit Bidegaray jusque dans son propre syndicat, qui ne rallia que 8 030 voix. Le coup fut dévastateur pour les conservateurs et galvanisant pour la « minorité bolchevique ». Un à un, les syndicats répudièrent leurs « dirigeants » et le contingent de la tendance syndicaliste militante se renforça de nouvelles recrues.

La grève ferroviaire de février

Les compagnies et le gouvernement contribuèrent eux aussi à renforcer la minorité révolutionnaire en retardant l'octroi des revendications des cheminots, en dépit de leurs promesses solennelles. Les arrogants magnats et directeurs des chemins de fer rêvaient d'écraser la minorité révolutionnaire qui perturbait sans cesse le trafic et les transports ; une ligne en grève aujourd'hui, une autre demain. Cela signifiait bien sûr une réduction des profits et des dividendes. De surcroît, ils n'étaient jamais tout à fait assurés de leur pouvoir si les syndicalistes révolutionnaires tenaient les rênes du syndicat le plus puissant. Ces « agitateurs » n'étaient jamais satisfaits, et leur cri de ralliement était : « Les chemins de fer aux cheminots ! »

HENRI SIROLLE
delegate to the C. G. T.
Born 1886.

Les spoliateurs de la France et leurs valets politiques — Millerand, Lefèvre (tous deux anciens socialistes, désormais hommes de main de la bourgeoisie), Steeg et Le Trocquer — savaient que si Monmousseau, Midol, Sirolle et leurs camarades s'emparaient un jour de la

Fédération ferroviaire (ou, comme Monatte le formule magistralement, « rendre l'organisation à la base »), le jour ne serait pas loin où eux et leurs tactiques reconquerraient la Confédération générale du travail avec ses 2 500 000 membres et « rendraient la terre à ceux qui la travaillent et les usines aux ouvriers ! »

L'air était chargé de présages inquiétants ; un délégué d'atelier dans les ateliers de Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, Campanaud, fut suspendu quarante-huit heures pour absence non autorisée. Il s'était rendu à Dijon à une convention de délégués d'atelier en dépit du refus du chef de dépôt de lui accorder le congé nécessaire. Les ouvriers réparateurs de Villeneuve se mirent immédiatement en grève pour défendre leur camarade ; ils considéraient la suspension comme une insulte à leur syndicat et une atteinte à leurs droits syndicaux, conquis au prix de tant de sacrifices.

Campanaud appartenait au syndicat ferroviaire le plus combatif, le P.L.M., et en quelques jours le camarade Léon Midol déclencha la grève sur l'ensemble de la ligne. L'ordre fut obéi unanimement ; plus un seul train ne circulait sur la principale artère ferroviaire de France. Le Comité central ferroviaire de Paris, composé de délégués de toutes les lignes ferroviaires (représentant la base et non les dirigeants), décida d'appeler toutes les autres lignes à la grève. Sa juridiction ne lui conférait pas une telle autorité, mais ses membres savaient où en étaient Bidegaray et sa clique. Cette grève, mouvement purement issu de la base, fut une démonstration remarquable de solidarité et de conscience de classe.

Les ordres de mobilisation ignorés

Les dirigeants furent totalement discrédités par leur compromis avec le gouvernement et les compagnies. La victoire de la « minorité » était assurée pour le prochain congrès. Chaverot, Sirolle, Sigrand, Lévêque et Hourdeaux, arrêtés pour incitation à la désobéissance et à la rébellion militaires, furent relâchés. Le gouvernement Millerand avait tiré les leçons de l'autre ex-socialiste, Briand, qui en 1910 avait brisé la grève ferroviaire en rappelant les grévistes sous les drapeaux. Des ordres de mobilisation furent émis, mais moins de 10 % y répondirent. À Lyon, les grévistes entassèrent leurs ordres de mobilisation à la Bourse du travail ; des milliers refusèrent d'accepter les lettres recommandées contenant ces ordres ; ailleurs, ils furent brûlés.

Les travailleurs français en avaient assez de la guerre et du militarisme. De surcroît, en 1910, ils n'étaient que 40 000. Ils sont désormais plus de 300 000.

Cette grève « hors-la-loi » accomplit une triple mission : elle désorganisa et sapa l'autorité des dirigeants de la Fédération ferroviaire, et à terme celle de tous les dirigeants conservateurs de la C.G.T. ; elle donna un élan au mouvement syndicaliste de gauche et mit en déroute les compagnies et le gouvernement. Les effets de la grève se firent rapidement sentir : un à un, les syndicats des différents réseaux

commencèrent à « faire le ménage », se débarrassant des dirigeants encombrants et timorés, et la base, à travers les « extrémistes » militants et jeunes, devint maîtresse de son propre destin.

LEON MIDOL
Secretary P.-L.-M.,
not arrested yet.

Le congrès général d'avril

Le coup de grâce final fut porté lors du congrès annuel qui se tint du 21 au 24 avril dans la célèbre salle Japy. Ce congrès marquera un jalon dans la future histoire révolutionnaire de France. Les deux tendances du syndicalisme — révolutionnaire et évolutionniste (pour ne pas dire réactionnaire) — qui s'étaient sans relâche disputé la suprématie dans la conduite des orientations, des tactiques et des idéaux du puissant syndicat, s'y affrontèrent pour un combat décisif. Là, Monmousseau et ses camarades réglèrent sans ménagement leur compte à leurs Gompers. En dépit de la défense assurée par Dumoulin, Jouhaux et ses propres partisans au sein de la fédération, Bidegaray fut vaincu. La « minorité » d'hier devint effectivement une majorité révolutionnaire. Le rapport « moral » de Bidegaray fut rejeté, et lui ainsi que son bureau furent désavoués par 196 298 voix contre 123 000, avec 16 031 abstentions — le P.L.M. et Paris-Orléans votant presque unanimement « contre », tandis que les syndicats d'Alsace-Lorraine votaient en bloc « pour » le rapport.

Ainsi les orientations et la conduite de Bidegaray furent condamnées, et les critiques et attaques de nos camarades Sirolle, Monmousseau et Midol, justifiées ; on les avait méprisamment raillés et sommés de se taire, car, après tout, « la majorité avait confiance en notre sage et prudente (lire criminelle) inaction ! » Cette réponse était toujours sur les lèvres de la soi-disant majorité, qui y camouflait toutes ses doubles jeux et ses affaires louches visant à étouffer les tendances révolutionnaires de la base.

La résolution sur l'action de la nouvelle majorité, qui constitue une splendide déclaration des principes syndicalistes rappelant la C.G.T. d'avant-guerre, est un document classique :

« ...l'organisation ouvrière rappelle que son objectif final est la disparition du capitalisme et du salariat ; elle prépare l'émancipation complète du prolétariat, qui ne peut se réaliser que par l'expropriation des capitalistes, et elle prône la grève générale comme moyen d'action ; elle considère que le syndicat, aujourd'hui organisation de combat, sera dans l'avenir l'organe de production, la base de la reconstruction sociale. »

Elle appelle les « cheminots » à ne pas répondre aux ordres de mobilisation en temps de grève.

« Transformation complète » — leur revendication

« Considérant la situation lamentable de la vie économique, qui exige une modification profonde de l'état des choses actuel, et que la nationalisation complète des grands services publics, des voies terrestres et fluviales, des mines et des grandes entreprises industrielles, facilitera cette transformation au bénéfice exclusif de la collectivité, le congrès décide, face aux provocations gouvernementales et au

report de décisions indispensables, d'engager une action de grève immédiate en formulant les revendications suivantes :

1. La nationalisation. 2. La réintégration immédiate des révoqués à leurs postes. 3. L'abandon des poursuites judiciaires. 4. La reconnaissance des droits syndicaux. »

"Everything tied up at Port Vieux."

Cette résolution fut adoptée par 171 037 voix (147 282 contre, avec 13 593 abstentions) ; le P.L.M. vota 65 248 voix pour la résolution des syndicalistes révolutionnaires, lue par le camarade Totti de Marseille, et 5 425 pour celle des conservateurs ; le réseau de l'Est, 22 163 pour, 6 346 contre ; le réseau d'Orléans, 26 170 pour, 20 000 contre ; les lignes de l'État, 42 091 pour, 10 699 contre ; l'Alsace-Lorraine, 23 000 pour, 26 000 contre. Le vote le plus important en faveur des conservateurs vient de la Compagnie du Nord, 41 491 voix contre la motion de Monmousseau et 9 337 pour. Ce syndicat est le plus conservateur et il joua les briseurs de grève lors de la première et de la deuxième grève (de mai). Ses membres participent à la reconstruction des régions dévastées et s'opposent manifestement à toute grève entravant cette tâche.

Mais lors de la séance finale à Aubervilliers, le congrès adopta à l'unanimité la résolution suivante :

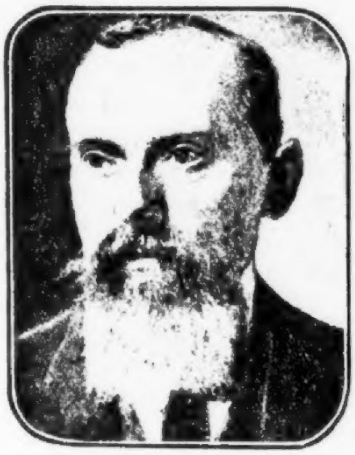
« Le congrès, laissant de côté toutes les questions de tendances et de conceptions, et en accord complet sur les revendications générales présentées par la fédération — (1) nationalisation, (2) réintégration des révoqués, (3) suspension de toutes les poursuites judiciaires, (4) reconnaissance des droits syndicaux —

Décide d'appeler à une grève générale sur tous les réseaux, laissant au comité fédéral le soin de fixer la date et d'examiner si le 1er Mai peut servir de pivot à l'action en accord avec la C.G.T. »

La nouvelle direction de la Fédération ferroviaire

Le 26 mai, le conseil fédéral des « cheminots » élut la commission exécutive. Par 28 voix contre 18 pour Bidegaray, le camarade Edmond Lévêque fut élu secrétaire administratif ; le camarade Gaston Monmousseau, secrétaire du bureau de propagande ; Léon Midol, rédacteur de l'organe officiel (dont le tirage dépasse 300 000 exemplaires) et des documents. Le camarade Henri Sirolle fut élu délégué auprès de la C.G.T. La majorité du comité exécutif est franchement révolutionnaire, ce qui facilite grandement le travail de propagande et d'agitation.

« Grèves révolutionnaires en France » — George Andreytchine
One Big Union Monthly, Vol. 2, n° 7, juillet 1920



FERNAND LORIOT
Teachers Federation;
Born 1870.

Lorsque la nouvelle direction — saluée par la presse vénale comme des « extrémistes », des « bolcheviks » et autres qualificatifs — prit ses fonctions, elle se mit immédiatement à la tâche d'appeler les cheminots à la grève pour le programme susmentionné. La C.G.T. s'opposa à toute initiative de ce genre, mais les militants de la Fédération ferroviaire lui imposèrent la déclaration du 27 avril, qui ne pouvait être révoquée. Le gant était déjà jeté au visage du gouvernement insensé et des arrogants magnats des chemins de fer.

La C.G.T. dut accepter cette amère réalité ; une fois de plus, elle avait été déjouée par les « éléments bolcheviques », comme le formula *Le Temps*.

Selon l'Associated Press, la grève paralysa complètement quatre réseaux sur cinq. Le 6 mai, le *Chicago Journal* publia le câblogramme spécial suivant :

« Marseille et Le Havre ont été complètement paralysés aujourd'hui par la grève des dockers, tandis que le service ferroviaire était fortement réduit. Seuls cinquante-deux trains furent expédiés de la gare Saint-Lazare hier, alors qu'en temps normal 562 trains partent quotidiennement de ce terminus. Quatre-vingt-quatorze navires transportant plus de 10 000 passagers sont bloqués à Marseille, dans l'impossibilité de poursuivre leur voyage. La grève, jusqu'ici limitée aux cheminots, aux dockers, aux marins et aux mineurs, menace désormais de s'étendre aux industries métallurgique et du bâtiment. Les métallurgistes déclarent qu'ils déposeront leurs outils demain et les ouvriers du bâtiment ont reçu l'instruction de se tenir prêts à l'appel de la fédération ouvrière. Des grévistes ont attaqué des trains express près de Lyon à coups de fusils et de pierres, et les dirigeants syndicaux affirment qu'une autre grève importante est entrée en vigueur aujourd'hui. »

Des persécutions à la Palmer

Le gouvernement et le régime capitaliste étaient en proie à l'hystérie. En dépit du fait que Jouhaux et sa clique, qui contrôlent la C.G.T., sa presse et ses syndicats, sont aussi inoffensifs que Gompers, et qu'ils levèrent le 19 mai la grève « de solidarité », la classe dirigeante pressentait une tempête menaçant de la balayer avec le reste de la poussière et de l'immondice pour faire table rase du sanglant règne de la bourgeoisie. On commença à parler de « soviets » ; la pensée générale amorçait sa dérive vers une révolution communiste. La crainte et la terreur de la bourgeoisie étaient peut-être sans fondement, mais elle engagea des représailles en s'attaquant au plus noble et au plus courageux des ouvriers — Pierre Monatte. Il fut arrêté le 3 mai au petit matin pour « complot contre la sûreté intérieure de l'État ».

Les journaux, la presse jaune, puante et prostituée, se mit à vomir ses stériles accusations : « Agent de Lénine, qui a perçu de l'argent pour son influent hebdomadaire, *La Vie ouvrière*. » On nous dit que Monatte fut jadis instituteur, mais renvoyé pour propagande révolutionnaire ; que depuis la guerre il s'est consacré à combattre Jouhaux et tous les traîtres à la cause sociale et qu'il est le chef de tous les communistes français, reconnu par Lénine et Trotski et soutenu par eux.

EDMOND LEVEQUE
Secretary Railroad Federation,
Born 1884.

Il y a tout juste quatorze ans, Monatte avait déjà été arrêté et inculpé du même « crime » pour avoir incité les mineurs du Pas-de-Calais à la rébellion. À cette époque, Clemenceau avait fort à faire lorsque Monatte, Broutchoux et Griffuelhes étaient en prison. Nous espérons que cette fois encore, le successeur de Clemenceau, Millerand, sera rapidement contraint de libérer notre héroïque camarade et ses associés.

Après Monatte, les camarades Totti et Verdier furent arrêtés, l'un à Marseille, l'autre à Decazeville. Ce dernier fut arraché de force des mains de la police par 500 cheminots et métallurgistes et n'a pas encore été rearrêté à ce jour. Quelle solidarité ! Puis Henri Sirolle, délégué des cheminots auprès de la C.G.T., fut arrêté. Après eux, Fernand Loriot, autre militant éminent de la Fédération des enseignants et chef de l'aile communiste du Parti socialiste ; après Loriot, le camarade Edmond Lévêque, secrétaire de la Fédération des travailleurs des chemins de fer ; après lui, Delagrange, Courage, Briard ; puis le bras de « l'ordre et de la loi » s'étendit jusqu'au camarade Boris Souvarine, rédacteur du *Bulletin communiste*, qui, avec Monatte et Loriot, forme le secrétariat exécutif de la Troisième Internationale en France ; et le 19 mai, notre brave camarade Monmousseau rejoignit les précités dans la fameuse prison de la Santé.

Un parallèle entre la France et la Russie

La presse capitaliste nous informe que les dix-sept « bolcheviks » arrêtés seront jugés en vertu des infâmes lois sur l'anarchisme, communément appelées *lois scélérates*, bien que seuls quelques-uns des accusés soient des anarchistes déclarés et qu'ils soient arrêtés pour des activités liées à une manifestation purement syndicaliste. Sirolle, Lévêque, Sigrand et Chaverot, tous cheminots, sont membres de la Fédération anarchiste et du groupe du *Libertaire* ; Monatte, Monmousseau, Delagrange, Totti, Rey, Briard, Verdier et Midol sont des syndicalistes « purs » ; Loriot et Souvarine, des marxistes. Mais qu'importe à la bourgeoisie hystérique ? Elle veut se débarrasser d'eux, et une loi lui vaut bien une autre. Mais nous sommes certains que le prolétariat français aura davantage à dire sur le sort des camarades emprisonnés que les juges capitalistes.

À l'été 1917, les bolcheviks russes organisèrent à Petrograd une grande manifestation contre le massacre inutile et criminel des soldats russes par Kerenski et Kornilov, à l'instigation des agents des Alliés en Russie. Le même jour, sur l'insistance de ces mêmes agents alliés, Kerenski et les « camarades » des mencheviks lancèrent un ordre d'arrestation contre Lénine, Trotski, Mme Kollontaï, Kamenev, Zinoviev et d'autres. Zinoviev et Lénine passèrent dans la clandestinité, tandis que les autres furent incarcérés dans l'infâme forteresse tsariste des Saints-Pierre-et-Paul. Mais ils n'y demeurèrent pas longtemps. Deux mois après leur libération, Trotski, Kamenev et Mme Kollontaï étaient à la tête du premier gouvernement ouvrier.

La bourgeoisie française est dans la même situation que l'était la bourgeoisie russe à cette époque. Les organes de production et de distribution de la France ont depuis longtemps cessé de fonctionner normalement. La persécution des révolutionnaires militants ne les fera pas mieux fonctionner. Le système capitaliste est totalement discrédité. Sa fin est plus proche qu'on ne le suppose. Mais une

action et une organisation révolutionnaires conscientes sont nécessaires pour accomplir la grande transformation — la révolution.

Monatte et ses camarades ont pris la mesure de cet enjeu et ont consacré leur vie, non sans fruit, à l'éducation et à l'organisation des travailleurs dans des syndicats industriels. Ils ont bien mérité l'amour et le dévouement de la classe ouvrière du monde entier. Nous leur souhaitons la liberté et la réalisation de leur idéal, qui est, selon les mots de Monatte : « La syndicalisation de l'industrie ; les usines aux ouvriers, la terre aux paysans ! »

La prochaine confrontation avec la bourgeoisie sonnera le glas de la classe capitaliste pourrie, criminelle et sanguinaire. La révolution communiste triomphera, grâce à l'organisation prête au combat de nos camarades syndicalistes.

Sources

One Big Union Monthly était un magazine publié à Chicago par le Bureau exécutif général des Industrial Workers of the World de 1919 à 1938, avec une interruption de février 1921 à septembre 1926, période durant laquelle parut *Industrial Pioneer*. *OBU* était une publication au grand format, faisant un large usage d'images, de caricatures et de photographies. Elle publiait des informations, des analyses, de la poésie et des œuvres artistiques, ainsi que des rapports locaux et nationaux des I.W.W. Ce fut également la tribune d'écriture de Mary E. Marcy après la suppression de l'*International Socialist Review* ; elle avait rejoint les I.W.W. en 1918.

PDF du numéro complet : https://archive.org/download/sim_one-big-union-monthly_1920-07_2_7/sim_one-big-union-monthly_1920-07_2_7.pdf

Source en ligne : https://revolutionsnewsstand.com/2023/03/30/revolutionary-strikes-in-france-by-george-andreytchine-from-one-big-union-monthly-vol-2-no-7-july-1920/

Texte original anglais (intégral)

'Revolutionary Strikes in France' by George Andreytchine

One Big Union Monthly, Vol. 2, No. 7, July 1920

What a wonderful introduction to the politics of post-war working class France. George Andreytchine writes on the wave of mass strikes that rocked France after World War One; the struggle within the C.G.T.; the role of the syndicalists, Communists, and Socialists; state repression; and sees the future in a coming together of Syndicalists and Bolsheviks in the new International.

"Qui veut manger doit produire !"

Great and heroic days have just passed in France; days in which the revolutionary will of the vanguard of the proletariat attempted to assert itself in no dubious way. The revolutionary syndicalists of the Railroad Workers' Federation called a general strike on all lines on the eve of May Day. The dock, marine and mine workers struck in solidarity with the militant "cheminots" (railroaders). Later on, the gas workers and electricians, the street car and subway workers of Paris were called out by the General Confederation of Labor in support of the striking railroaders. The metal workers of Paris, the rank and file, also struck, ignoring the pleas and supplications of their conservative officials. At a certain time the country was face to face with spontaneous insurrectional outbursts here and there.

But the time was not propitious for a revolution, for revolutions are not decreed by executive committees or union militants. It is evident that the causes of this strike were not deep-seated; were of no elemental nature.

The Struggle for Supremacy in the C.G.T.

The leaders of the railroad workers knew thoroughly well that a revolution was an impossibility at this particular moment. They declared the strike more against the conservative leaders of the General Confederation of Labor and of their own organization rather than against the capitalist regime and its government. They hoped to create the necessary sentiment and class solidarity, to awaken the pre-war militancy of the French proletariat and demolish the machine that is sapping the revolutionary will and energy of the working class — Jouhaux, Dumoulin, Merrheim, Bidegaray and their associates.

This strike was a challenge to them. If they refused to support it, their goose would be cooked; if they supported it whole-heartedly, the revolutionary syndicalists could wrest it from their control and give a new direction to its forces, possibly attempt a revolution. But the shrewd politicians of the C.G.T. chose neither of those courses. After seeing the folly of opposing this tornado, which would have meant suicide, they reluctantly "sympathized" with the struggle of the railroaders and stabbed them from behind. The unions they called "in sympathy" with the railroad strike were allowed to make their own choice of striking or not.

Some of the leaders of the railroad workers' unions actually scabbed and carried on an insidious propaganda against the new "bolshevist regime" of their federation. Especially notorious were the leaders of the Northern Railway, who called off the strike just then when it was assuming a general extension.

The Consolidation of the Militants

During the war, as in all European countries, the majority of the syndicalists and socialists gave their support and connivance to the capitalists in the great murderfest. But in each country there remained an incorruptible and brave minority which rejected the infamous "union sacrée" with the eternal enemy of the working class and held high the red flag of the workers' International above the treason and odious compromises of the majority.

The minority in France was grouped round our valiant Fellow-Worker Pierre Monatte, editor of the syndicalist review, *"La Vie Ouvrière"* (The Toilers' Life). All of the readers of The One Big Union Monthly know already the picturesque revolutionary career of Monatte. The men and women who joined his group are destined to play an important part in future events; nay, they have been in the thick of the battle against capitalism for many years and have carried the brunt of it ever since the armistice, when syndicalism of pre-war times assumed its function once more in some of the most important unions.

The railroad workers and metal workers were the center of all syndicalist action and propaganda. Since the defection of Merrheim, the Zimmerwaldian pilgrim, and of Dumoulin, the man who had pitilessly unmasked and denounced Jouhaux and his clique, the railroad workers' union became the arena for the death-or-life struggle of the two tendencies. Monatte's group was strengthened by the adherence of several important figures who had a considerable influence in this key industry: Gaston Monmousseau, a young and powerful orator, writer and organizer, leading spirit of the revolutionaries in the State Railway; Leon Midol, a man of forceful character and determination, who time and time again has harassed the railroad companies and their government with his "personal strikes" ("the one minute strike" on the P.L.M. in January, 1919, and the February railroad strike, 1920), a great student of transportation and production, general secretary of the most important railroad union, the Paris, Lyons and Mediterranean line; Dejonckere, of the State lines; Delagrange and Olivier, of the Paris-Orleans lines; Totti, of the P.L.M.; Leveque, of the State lines; Chaverot, of the P.L.M. We must not fail to mention here the capable and fearless anarchist Sirolle, who is very close to Monatte's group.

Class Struggle Against Class Collaboration

These militant syndicalists worked ceaselessly for the triumph of the principle of the class-struggle as opposed to the class collaboration practised by the officials of their general organization and the C.G.T. In the congress of their federation in May, 1919, Fellow Worker Monmousseau's revolutionary motion was supported by 108,000 members as against 130,000 for that of Bidegaray, the conservative secretary of the federation.

In July, 1919, Bidegaray and the officials of the C.G.T. sabotaged the general strike called for protest against intervention in Russia and Hungary, and that was considered as an act of treason by the "minority," who were in no mood to allow their government to strangulate the Russian revolution. The strike was called off on the eve of July 21st; Hungary was invaded and the intervention in Russia given an impetus. But that spelled the doom of Bidegaray's power. The propaganda carried on against him and the other social traitors was very fruitful. In February, 1920, the workers of the State railway held their congress. By an overwhelming majority of 57,047, Monmousseau defeated Bidegaray in his own union, who rallied only 8,030 votes. The blow was stunning to the conservatives and an inspiration to the "bolshevist minority." One by one the unions have been repudiating their "leaders" and the contingent of the militant syndicalist tendency was being reinforced with fresh recruits.

The February Railroad Strike

The companies and the government also played into the hands of the revolutionary minority; they delayed the granting of the demands of the railroad workers in spite of their solemn promises. The arrogant railroad magnates and directors were dreaming of crushing the revolutionary minority who constantly interrupted traffic and transportation; one line strikes today, another tomorrow. This, of course, means curtailment of profits and dividends. Besides, they were never too sure of their power if the revolutionary syndicalists were at the helm of the most important and powerful union. These "agitators" were never satisfied, and their battle-cry was, "the railroads to the railroad workers!"

The plunderers of France and their political dummies — Millerand, Lefevre (both ex-socialists, and now henchmen of the bourgeoisie), Steeg and Le Trocquer — knew that if Monmousseau, Midol, Sirolle and their fellow workers ever captured the Railroad Federation (or, as Monatte puts it masterfully, "render the organization to the rank and file"), the day will not be far off when they and their tactics will reconquer the General Confederation of Labor with its 2,500,000 members and "render the land to those who till it and the factories to the workers!"

The air was charged with disquieting portents; a shop delegate in the yards of Villeneuve-St. Georges, Campanaud, was suspended for forty-eight hours from work for unauthorized leave of absence. He had gone to Dijon to a shop delegates' convention in spite of the refusal of the superintendent to grant him the necessary leave. The shop repairers at Villeneuve immediately struck in defense of their fellow worker; they considered the suspension an insult to their union and an invasion of their syndical rights, conquered with so much sacrifice.

Campanaud happens to belong to the most militant railroad union, the P.L.M., and in a few days Fellow Worker Leon Midol called out on strike the whole line. The order was obeyed by all; not a train moved on the main railroad artery in France. The Paris Central Railroad Committee, comprising delegates from all railroad lines (representing the rank and file, and not officials) decided to call out all other lines. Their jurisdiction did not embrace so much authority, but they knew where Bidegaray and his clique stood. The strike, a purely rank and file affair, was a marvelous demonstration of solidarity and class consciousness.

Mobilization Order Ignored

The officials were completely discredited by their compromise with the government and companies. The victory of the "minority" was assured for the next congress. Chaverot, Sirolle, Sigrand, Leveque and Hourdeaux, who were arrested for inciting the military to disobedience and revolt, were released. The Millerand government had learned a lesson from the other ex-socialist, Briand, who in 1910 broke the railroad strike by calling the strikers to the colors. Mobilization orders were issued but less than 10 per cent responded. At Lyons the strikers piled up their mobilization orders in the Bourse du Travail; thousands refused to accept the registered letters with the orders; at other centers they were burned.

The French workers have had enough of war and militarism. Besides, in 1910 they were only 40,000. Now they are over 300,000.

This "outlaw" strike accomplished a threefold mission: it dislocated and undermined the authority of the officials of the Railroad Federation and ultimately all the conservative leaders of the C.G.T.; strengthened and gave a momentum to the left syndicalist movement and beat the companies and government to a frazzle. The effects of the strike soon became evident: one by one the unions of the

various systems began "cleaning their house," getting rid of the cumbersome and timid "leaders," and the rank and file, through the militant and young "extremists," became masters of their own destiny.

The General Congress in April

The final coup de grâce was delivered at the annual congress which lasted from April 21 to 24 in the famous Japy hall. That congress will be a landmark in the future revolutionary history of France. The two tendencies — revolutionary and evolutionary (not to call it reactionary) — of syndicalism, which have relentlessly struggled for supremacy in directing the policies, tactics and ideals of the formidable union, met there for a decisive combat. There Monmousseau and his fellow workers mercilessly dealt with their Gomperses. In spite of the defense of Dumoulin and Jouhaux and his own followers in the federation, Bidegaray was vanquished. The "minority" of yesterday became actually a revolutionary majority. Bidegaray's "moral" report was rejected and he and his executive were repudiated by a vote of 196,298 against 123,000 for it, with 16,031 abstentions — the P.L.M. and Paris-Orleans voting almost unanimously "against," while the Alsace-Lorraine unions voted en bloc "for" the report.

Thus the policies and conduct of Bidegaray were condemned and the criticisms and attacks of our fellow workers, Sirolle, Monmousseau and Midol, justified; they were contemptuously sneered at and told to keep their mouth shut, for, forsooth, "the majority had confidence in our wise and careful (read criminal) inaction!" This reply was always on the lips of the so-called majority, who camouflaged with it all their double-dealings and unclean business of strangulating the revolutionary tendencies of the rank and file.

The resolution on action of the new majority, which is a splendid declaration of syndicalist principles, reminding us of the pre-war C.G.T., is a classic document:

"...the workers' organization repeats that its final goal is the disappearance of capitalism and the wage system; it prepares the complete emancipation of the proletariat, which cannot be realized except through the expropriation of the capitalists, and it extols the general strike as the means of action; it considers that the union, today an organization of combat, in the future shall be the organ of production, the basis for social reconstruction."

It calls on the "cheminots" not to respond to the order of mobilization in time of strike.

"Complete Transformation" Their Demand

"Considering the lamentable situation of the economic life, which demands a profound modification of the actual state of affairs, and that the complete nationalization of the great public services, the land and water routes, the mines and the great industrial enterprises, will facilitate this transformation for the exclusive benefit of the collectivity, the congress decides, in the face of government provocations and the postponement of indispensable decisions, to commence an immediate strike action by putting forth the following demands:

1. Nationalization. 2. Immediate reinstatement of the revoked to their posts. 3. The abandonment of judiciary prosecutions. 4. Recognition of the syndical rights."

This resolution was adopted by a vote of 171,037 (147,282 against, with 13,593 abstentions), the P.L.M. voting 65,248 for the resolution of the revolutionary syndicalists, which was read by Fellow Worker Totti

of Marseilles, and 5,425 for that of the conservatives; the Eastern, 22,163 for it, 6,346 against; the Orleans road, 26,170 for, 20,000 against; the State lines, 42,091 for, 10,699 against; Alsace-Lorraine, 23,000 for, 26,000 against. The biggest vote for the conservatives comes from the Compagnie du Nord, 41,491 against Monmousseau's motion and 9,337 for it. This union is the most conservative and it scabbed during the first and second (May) strikes. They are helping rebuild the devastated regions and evidently are against all strikes hampering that task.

But at the final session in Aubervilliers, the congress unanimously adopted the following resolution:

"The congress, leaving aside all questions of tendencies and conceptions, and in complete accord upon the general demands presented by the federation, (1) nationalization, (2) reintegration of the revoked, (3) suspension of all judiciary prosecutions, (4) the recognition of syndical rights,

Decides to call a general strike on all systems, leaving to the federal committee the care of fixing the date and examining if May First can be the pivot for action in accord with the C.G.T."

The New Administration of the R.R. Federation

On May 26th the federal council of the "cheminots" elected the executive commission. By a vote of 28 against 18 for Bidegaray, Fellow Worker Edmond Leveque was elected administrative secretary; Fellow Worker Gaston Monmousseau, secretary of the propaganda bureau; Leon Midol, editor of the official organ (which has a circulation over 300,000) and documents. Fellow Worker Henri Sirolle was elected as delegate to the C.G.T. The majority of the executive committee is frankly revolutionary, and that makes the work of propaganda and agitation so much easier.

When the new administration — hailed by the venal press as "extremists," "bolsheviki" and what not — assumed its duties, they immediately put themselves to the task of calling the railroad workers on strike for the above mentioned program. The C.G.T. opposed any such move, but the militants of the Railroad Federation rammed down their throats the declaration of April 27, which could not be revoked. The glove was already thrown in the face of the insane government and arrogant railroad magnates.

The C.G.T. had to accept this bitter truth; once again they have been outmaneuvered by the "bolshevist elements," as *Le Temps* put it.

The strike, according to the Associated Press, was a complete tie-up on four systems out of the five. On May 6th the *Chicago Journal* published the following special cablegram:

"Marseilles and Havre were completely tied up today by the strike of dock workers, while railroad service was greatly reduced. Only fifty-two trains were dispatched from St. Lazare station yesterday, while in normal times 562 leave this terminal daily. Ninety-four ships with over 10,000 passengers are stranded at Marseilles, unable to continue their journeys. The strike, which has hitherto been confined to railroad men, dock men, seamen and miners, now threatens to overrun the metal and building trades. The metal workers declare they will throw down their tools tomorrow and the building workers have been instructed to be ready for the labor federation to call them out. Strikers attacked express trains near Lyons with rifles and stones, and the labor leaders assert that another important additional strike became effective today."

Persecutions à la Palmer

The government and the capitalist regime were in a state of hysterics. In spite of the fact that Jouhaux and his clique, who control the C.G.T., its press and unions, are as harmless as Gompers, and that on May 19 they called off the "sympathetic" strike, the ruling class felt a foreboding storm which might sweep them off with the rest of the useless dust and filth and make a clean slate of the bloody reign of the bourgeoisie. "Soviets" began to be talked of; the general trend of thought began drifting toward a communist revolution. The fear and terror of the bourgeoisie might have been groundless, but it began reprisals by striking at the noblest and bravest worker — Pierre Monatte. He was arrested on May 3rd, early in the morning, for "plotting against the internal safety of the State."

The papers, the yellow, stinking, prostituted press, began vomiting its sterile accusations: "Lenin's agent, who has taken money for his influential weekly, *La Vie Ouvrière*." They told us that Monatte was once a teacher, but dismissed for revolutionary propaganda; that ever since the war he had been occupied in fighting Jouhaux and all social traitors and that he is the leader of all French communists, recognized by Lenin and Trotsky and supported by them.

Just fourteen years ago Monatte was arrested and charged with the same "crime" for having incited the miners of Pas-de-Calais to rebellion. That time Clemenceau had his hands full when Monatte, Broutchoux and Griffuelhes were in prison. We hope that this time, too, Clemenceau's successor, Millerand, will soon be compelled to release our heroic fellow worker and his associates.

After Monatte, Fellow Workers Totti and Verdier were arrested, one in Marseilles, the other in Decazeville. The latter was forcibly taken from the hands of the police by 500 railroad and metal workers and so far has not been rearrested. Some solidarity! Then Henri Sirolle, railroaders' delegate to the C.G.T., was arrested. After these, Fernand Loriot, another prominent militant of the Teachers' Federation and leader of the communist wing of the Socialist party; after Loriot, Fellow Worker Edmond Leveque, secretary of the Railroad Workers' Federation; after him Delagrange, Courage, Briard; then the arm of "law and order" reached for Comrade Boris Souvarine, editor of the *Bulletin Communiste*, who, together with Monatte and Loriot, form the executive secretariat of the Third International in France; and on May 19 our brave Fellow Worker Monmousseau joined the above-mentioned in the famous "Santé" prison.

A Parallel Between France and Russia

The capitalist press informs us that seventeen arrested "bolsheviki" will be tried under the infamous anarchist laws, commonly called *"lois scélérates"* (rascally laws), in spite of the fact that only a few of the accused are avowed anarchists and they are arrested for activities in connection with a purely syndicalist manifestation. Sirolle, Leveque, Sigrand and Chaverot, all railroaders, are members of the Anarchist Federation and the *"Libertaire"* group; Monatte, Monmousseau, Delagrange, Totti, Rey, Briard, Verdier and Midol are "pure" syndicalists; Loriot and Souvarine — Marxians. But what does it matter to the hysterical bourgeoisie? It wants to get rid of them, and one law is just as good to them as another. But we are sure that the French proletariat will have more to say about the imprisoned fellow workers than the capitalist judges.

In the summer of 1917 the Russian Bolsheviki made a great demonstration in Petrograd against the useless and criminal murder of Russian soldiers by Kerensky and Kornilov, at the behest of the Allied agents in Russia. The same day, on the insistence of the same Allied agents, Kerensky and the "comrades" of the Mensheviki issued an order for the arrest of Lenin, Trotsky, Mme. Kollontay, Kamenev, Zinoviev and others. Zinoviev and Lenin went into hiding, while the rest were immured in the infamous

Czarist fortress Sts. Peter and Paul. But they did not stay there very long. Two months after their release, Trotsky, Kamenev and Mme. Kollontay were at the head of the first workers' government.

The French bourgeoisie is in the same boat as the Russian was at that time. The productive and distributive organs of France have long ago ceased to function normally. Persecution of militant revolutionaries will not make them run any better. The capitalist system is completely discredited. Its end is nearer than we suspect. But a conscious revolutionary action and organization is necessary to accomplish the great transformation — the revolution.

Monatte and his fellow workers have looked into that matter and they have devoted not in vain their lives to the education and organization of the workers in industrial unions. They have well merited the love and devotion of the working class the world over. We wish them freedom and realization of their ideal, which is, as Monatte puts it: "Syndicalization of industry; the factories to the workers, the land to the peasants!"

The next encounter with the bourgeoisie will spell the doom of the rotten and criminal, bloodthirsty capitalist class. The Communist Revolution will succeed, thanks to the ready organization of our fellow workers, the syndicalists.

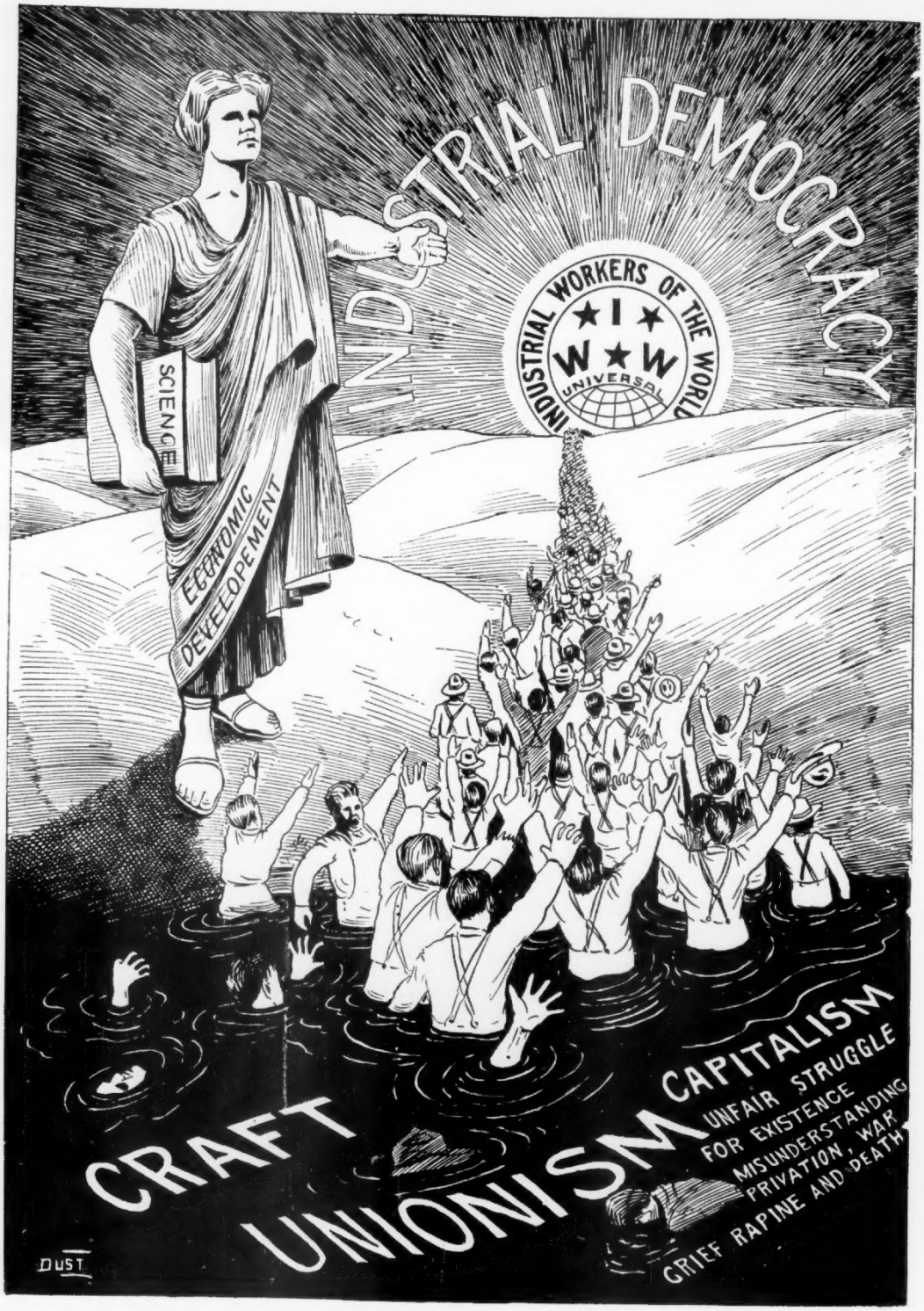
Sources

PDF of the full issue : https://archive.org/download/sim_one-big-union-monthly_1920-07_2_7/sim_one-big-union-monthly_1920-07_2_7.pdf

Source en ligne : https://revolutionsnewsstand.com/2023/03/30/revolutionary-strikes-in-france-by-george-andreytchine-from-one-big-union-monthly-vol-2-no-7-july-1920/

Source

- *One Big Union Monthly*, Vol. 2, No. 7, juillet 1920
- Publication de l'Industrial Workers of the World



COMING OUT OF THE MIRE

« Grèves révolutionnaires en France » — George Andreytchine
One Big Union Monthly, Vol. 2, n° 7, juillet 1920

The Final Conflict—the Workers' driving away the "Enemies of the People": capitalists, generals, clericals and politicians.
—From "La Vie Ouvriere."

Revolutionary Strikes in France

By GEORGE ANDREYTCHINE

"Qui veut manger doit produire!"

Great and heroic days have just passed in France; days in which the revolutionary will of the vanguard of the proletariat attempted to assert itself in no dubious way. The revolutionary syndicalists of the Railroad Workers' Federation called a general strike on all lines on the eve of May Day. The dock, marine and mine workers struck in solidarity with the militant "cheminots" (railroaders). Later on, the gas workers and electricians, the street car and subway workers of Paris were called out by the General Confederation of Labor in support of the striking railroaders. The metal workers of Paris, the rank and file, also struck, ignoring the pleas and supplications of their conservative officials. At a certain time the country was face to face with spontaneous insurrectional outbursts here and there.

But the time was not propitious for a revolution, for revolutions are not decreed by executive committees or union militants. It is evident that the causes of this strike were not deep-seated; were of no elemental nature.

The Struggle for Supremacy in the C. G. T.

The leaders of the railroad workers knew thoroughly well that a revolution was an impossibility at this particular moment. They declared the strike more against the conservative leaders of the General Confederation of Labor and of their own organization rather than against the capitalist regime and its government. They hoped to create the necessary sentiment and class solidarity, to awaken the pre-war militancy of the French proletariat and demolish the machine that is sapping the revolutionary will and energy of the working class—Jouhaux, Dumoulin, Merrheim, Bidegaray and their associates.

This strike was a challenge to them. If they refused to support it, their goose would be cooked; if they supported it whole-heartedly, the revolutionary syndicalists could wrest it from their control and give a new direction to its forces, possibly attempt a revolution. But the shrewd politicians of the C. G. T. chose neither of those courses. After seeing the folly of opposing this tornado, which would have meant suicide, they reluctantly "sympathized" with the struggle of the railroaders and stabbed them from behind. The unions they called "in sympathy" with the railroad strike were allowed to make their own choice of striking or not.

Some of the leaders of the railroad workers' unions actually scabbed and carried on an insidious propaganda against the new "bolshevist regime" of their federation. Especially notorious were the leaders of the Northern Railway, who called off the strike just then when it was assuming a general extension.

The Consolidation of the Militants

During the war, as in all European countries, the majority of the syndicalists and socialists gave their support and connivance to the capitalists in the great murderfest. But in each country there remained an incorruptible and brave minority which rejected the infamous "union sacree" with the eternal enemy of the working class and held high the red flag of the workers' International above the treason and odious compromises of the majority.

The minority in France was grouped round our valiant Fellow-Worker Pierre Monatte, editor of the syndicalist review, "La Vie Ouvriere" (The Toilers' Life). All of the readers of **The One Big Union Monthly** know already the picturesque revolutionary career of Monatte. The men and women who joined his group are destined to play an important part in future events; nay, they have been in the thick of the battle against capitalism for many years and have carried the brunt of it ever since the armistice, when syndicalism of pre-war times assumed its function once more in some of the most important unions.

PIERRE MONATTE,
Editor "La Vie Ouvriere"; born 1881.

The railroad workers and metal workers were the center of all syndicalist action and propaganda. Since the defection of Merrheim, the Zimmerwaldian pilgrim, and of Dumoulin, the man who had pitilessly unmasked and denounced Jouhaux and his clique, the railroad workers' union became the arena for the death-or-life struggle of the two tendencies. Monatte's group was strengthened by the adherence of several important figures who had a considerable influence in this key industry: Gaston Monmousseau, a young and powerful orator, writer

« Grèves révolutionnaires en France » — George Andreytchine
One Big Union Monthly, Vol. 2, n° 7, juillet 1920

and organizer, leading spirit of the revolutionaries in the State Railway; Leon Midol, a man of forceful character and determination, who time and time again has harassed the railroad companies and their government with his "personal strikes" ("the one minute strike" on the P. L. M. in January, 1919, and the February railroad strike, 1920), a great student of transportation and production, general secretary of the most important railroad union, the Paris, Lyons and Mediterranean line; Dejonckere, of the State lines; Delagrange and Olivier, of the Paris-Orleans lines; Totti, of the P. L. M.; Leveque, of the State lines; Chaverot, of the P. L. M. We must not fail to mention here the capable and fearless anarchist Sirolle, who is very close to Monatte's group.

Class Struggle Against Class Collaboration

These militant syndicalists worked ceaselessly for the triumph of the principle of the class-struggle as opposed to the class collaboration practised by the officials of their general organization and the C. G. T. In the congress of their federation in May, 1919, Fellow Worker Monmousseau's revolutionary motion was supported by 108,000 members as against 130,000 for that of Bidegaray, the conservative secretary of the federation.

In July, 1919, Bidegaray and the officials of the C. G. T. sabotaged the general strike called for protest against intervention in Russia and Hungary, and that was considered as an act of treason by the "minority," who were in no mood to allow their government to stangulate the Russian revolution. The strike was called off on the eve of July 21st; Hungary was invaded and the intervention in Russia given an impetus. But that spelled the doom of Bidegaray's power. The propaganda carried on against him and the other social traitors was very fruitful. In February, 1920, the workers of the State railway held their congress. By an overwhelming majority of 57,047 Monmousseau defeated Bidegaray in his own union, who rallied only 8,030 votes. The blow was stunning to the conservatives and an inspiration to the "bolshevist minority." One by one the unions have been repudiating their "leaders" and the contingent of the militant syndicalist tendency was being reinforced with fresh recruits.

The February Railroad Strike

The companies and the government also played into the hands of the revolutionary minority; they delayed the granting of the demands of the railroad workers in spite of their solemn promises. The arrogant railroad magnates and directors were dreaming of crushing the revolutionary minority who constantly interrupted traffic and transportation; one line strikes today, another tomorrow. This, of course, means curtailment of profits and dividends. Besides, they were never too sure of their power if the revolutionary syndicalists were at the helm of the most important and powerful union. These "agitators" were never satisfied, and their battle-cry was, **"the railroads to the railroad workers!"** The plunderers of France and their political dummies, Millerand, Lefevre (both ex-socialists, and now henchmen of the bourgeoisie), Steeg and Le Trocquer, knew that if Monmousseau, Midol, Sirolle and their fellow workers ever captured the Railroad Federation (or, as Monatte puts it masterfully, "render the organization to the rank and file"), the day will not be far off when they and their tactics will reconquer the General Confederation of Labor with its 2,500,000 members and "render the land to those who till it and the factories to the workers!"

The air was charged with disquieting portents; a shop delegate in the yards of Villeneuve-St. Georges, Campanaud, was suspended for forty-eight hours from work for unauthorized leave of absence. He had gone to Dijon to a shop delegates' convention in spite of the refusal of the superintendent to grant him the necessary leave. The shop repairers at Villeneuve immediately struck in defense of their fellow worker; they considered the suspension an insult to their union and an invasion of their syndical rights, conquered with so much sacrifice.

Campanaud happens to belong to the most militant railroad union, the P. L. M., and in a few days Fellow Worker Leon Midol called out on strike the whole line. The order was obeyed by all; not a train moved on the main railroad artery in France. The Paris Central Railroad Committee, comprising delegates from all railroad lines (representing the **rank and file**, and not officials) decided to call out all other lines. Their jurisdiction did not embrace so much authority, but they knew where Bidegaray and his clique stood. The strike, a purely rank and file affair, was a marvelous demonstration of solidarity and class consciousness.

Mobilization Order Ignored

The officials were completely discredited by their compromise with the government and companies. The victory of the "minority" was assured for the next congress. Chaverot, Sirolle, Sigrand, Leveque and Hourdeaux, who were arrested for inciting the military to disobedience and revolt, were released. The Millerand government had learned a lesson from the other ex-socialist, Briand, who in 1910, broke the railroad strike by calling the strikers to the colors. Mobilization orders were issued but less than 10 per cent responded. At Lyons the strikers piled up their mobilization orders in the Bourse du Travail, thou-

GASTON MONMOUSSEAU
leader of the Railroad militants. Born in 1883.

« Grèves révolutionnaires en France » — George Andreytchine
One Big Union Monthly, Vol. 2, n° 7, juillet 1920

gress unanimously adopted the following resolution:

"The congress, leaving aside all questions of tendencies and conceptions, and in complete accord upon the general demands presented by the federation, (1) nationalization, (2) reintegration of the revoked, (3) suspension of all judiciary prosecutions, (4) the recognition of syndical rights,

"Decides to call a general strike on all systems, leaving to the federal committee the care of fixing the date and examining if May First can be the pivot for action in accord with the C. G. T."

The New Administration of the R. R. Federation

On May 26th the federal council of the "cheminots" elected the new executive commission. By a vote of 28 against 18 for Bidegaray, Fellow Worker Edmond Leveque was elected administrative secretary; Fellow Worker Gaston Monmousseau, secretary of the propaganda bureau; Leon Midol, editor of the official organ (which has a circulation over 300,000) and documents. Fellow Worker Henri Sirolle was elected as delegate to the C. G. T. The majority of the executive committee is frankly revolutionary, and that makes the work of propaganda and agitation so much easier.

When the new administration, hailed by the venal press as "extremists," "bolsheviki" and what not, assumed its duties, they immediately put themselves to the task of calling the railroad workers on strike for the above mentioned program. The C. G. T. opposed any such move, but the militants of the Railroad Federation rammed down their throats the declaration of April 27, which could not be revoked. The glove was already thrown in the face of the insane government and arrogant railroad magnates.

The C. G. T. had to accept this bitter truth; once again they have been outmaneuvered by the "bolshevist elements," as **"Le Temps"** put it.

The strike, according to the Associated Press, was a complete tie-up on four systems out of the five. On May 6th the "Chicago Journal" published the following special cablegram:

"The Extent of the Strike

Marseilles and Havre were completely tied up today by the strike of dock workers, while railroad service was greatly reduced. Only fifty-two trains were dispatched from St. Lazare station yesterday, while in normal times 562 leave this terminal daily.

"Everything tied up at Port Vieux."

Ninety-four Ships Stranded at Marseilles

Developments of the French strike are assuming alarming proportions. The position of the seaports is becoming increasingly serious.

Ninety-four ships with over 10,000 passengers are stranded at Marseilles, unable to continue their journeys.

The strike, which has hitherto been confined to railroad men, dock men, seamen and miners, now threatens to overrun the metal and building trades. The metal workers declare they will throw down their tools tomorrow and the building workers have been instructed to be ready for the labor federation to call them out.

Strikers attacked express trains near Lyons with rifles and stones, and the labor leaders assert that another important additional strike became effective today."

Persecutions a la Palmer

The government and the capitalist regime were in a state of hysterics.

LEON MIDOL
Secretary P.-L.-M.,
not arrested yet.

In spite of the fact that Jouhaux and his clique, who control the C. G. T., its press and unions, are as harmless as Gompers, and that on May 19 they called off the "sympathetic" strike, the ruling class felt a foreboding storm which might sweep them off with the rest of the useless dust and filth and make a clean slate of the bloody reign of the bourgeoisie. "Soviets" began to be talked of; the general trend of thought began drifting toward a communist revolution. The fear and terror of the bourgeoisie might have been groundless, but it began reprisals by striking at the noblest and bravest worker—Pierre Monatte. He was arrested on May 3rd, early in the morning, for "plotting against the internal safety of the State."

The papers, the yellow, stinking prostituted press, began vomiting its sterile accusations. "Lenin's agent, who has taken money for his influential weekly, 'La Vie Ouvriere'." They told us that Monatte was once a teacher, but dismissed for revolutionary propaganda; that ever since the war has been occupied in fighting Jouhaux and all social traitors and that he is the leader of all French communists, recognized by Lenine and Trotsky and supported by them.

Just fourteen years ago Monatte was arrested and charged with the same "crime" for having incited the miners of Pas-de-Calais to rebellion. That time Clemenceau had his hands full when Monatte, Broutchoux and Griffuelhes were in prison. We hope that this time, too, Clemenceau's successor, Millerand, will soon be compelled to release our heroic fellow worker and his associates.

After Monatte, Fellow Workers Totti and Ver-

« Grèves révolutionnaires en France » — George Andreytchine
One Big Union Monthly, Vol. 2, n° 7, juillet 1920

sands refused to accept the registered letters with the orders; at other centers they were burned.

The French workers have had enough of war and militarism. Besides, in 1910 they were only 40,000. Now they are over 300,000.

This "outlaw" strike accomplished a threefold mission: It dislocated and undermined the authority of the officials of the Railroad Federation and ultimately all the conservative leaders of the C. G. T.; strengthened and gave a momentum to the left syndicalist movement and beat the companies and government to a frazzle. The effects of the strike soon became evident: One by one the unions of the various systems began "cleaning their house," getting rid of the cumbersome and timid "leaders," and the rank and file, through the militant and young "extremists," became masters of their own destiny.

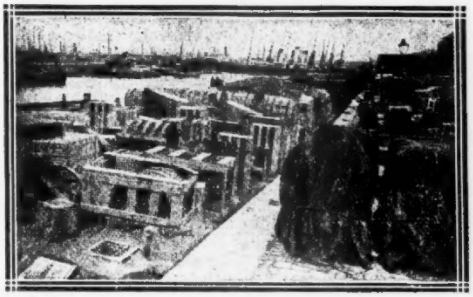
The General Congress in April

The final **coup-de-grace** was delivered at the annual congress which lasted from April 21 to 24 in the famous Japy hall. That congress will be a landmark in the future revolutionary history of France. The two tendencies, revolutionary and evolutionary (not to call it reactionary), of syndicalism, which have relentlessly struggled for supremacy in directing the policies, tactics and ideals of the formidable union, met there for a decisive combat. There Monmousseau and his fellow workers mercilessly dealt with their Gomperses. In spite of the defense of Dumoulin and Jouhaux and his own followers in the federation, Bidegaray was vanquished. The "minority" of yesterday became actually a revolutionary majority. Bidegaray's "moral" report was rejected and he and his executive were repudiated by a vote of 196,298 against 123,000 for it, with 16,031 abstention, the P. L. M. and Paris-Orleans voting almost unanimously "against," while the Alsace-Lorraine unions voted en bloc "for" the report.

Thus the policies and conduct of Bidegaray were condemned and the criticisms and attacks of our fellow workers, Sirolle, Monmousseau and Midol, justified; they were contemptuously sneered at and told to keep their mouth shut, for, forsooth, "the majority had confidence in our wise and careful (read **criminal**) inaction!" This reply was always on the lips of the so-called majority, who camouflaged with it all their double-dealings and unclean business of strangulating the revolutionary tendencies of the rank and file.

HENRI SIROLLE
delegate to the C. G. T.
Born 1886.

The resolution on action of the new majority, which is a splendid declaration of syndicalist principles, reminding us of the pre-war C. G. T., is a classic document. " * * * **the workers' organization repeats that its final goal is the disappearance of capitalism and the wage system;** it prepares the complete emancipation of the proletariat, which cannot be realized except through the expropriation of the capitalists, and it extols the general strike as the means of action; it considers that the union, today an organization of combat, in the future shall be the organ of production, the basis for social reconstruction." It calls on the "cheminots" not to respond to the order of mobilization in time of strike.



Goods stocked on the quais of Joliette.

"Complete Transformation" Their Demand

"Considering the lamentable situation of the economic life, which demands a profound modification of the actual state of affairs, and that the complete nationalization of the great public services, the land and water routes, the mines and the great industrial enterprises, will facilitate this transformation for the exclusive benefit of the collectivity, the congress decides, in the face of government provocations and the postponement of indispensable decisions, to commence an immediate strike action by putting forth the following demands:

"1. Nationalization.

"2. Immediate reinstatement of the revoked to their posts.

"3. The abandonment of judiciary prosecutions.

"4. Recognition of the syndical rights."

This resolution was adopted by a vote of 171,037 (147,282 against, with 13,593 abstentions), the P. L. M. voting 65,248 for the resolution of the revolutionary syndicalists, which was read by Fellow Worker Totti of Marseilles, and 5,425 for that of the conservatives; the Eastern, 22,163 for it, 6,346 against; the Orleans road, 26,170 for, 20,000 against; the State lines, 42,091 for, 10,699 against; Alsace-Loraine, 23,000 for, 26,000 against. The biggest vote for the conservatives comes from the Compagnie du Nord, 41,491 against Monmousseau's motion and 9,337 for it. This union is the most conservative and it scabbed during the first and second (May) strikes. They are helping rebuild the devastated regions and evidently are against all strikes hampering that task.

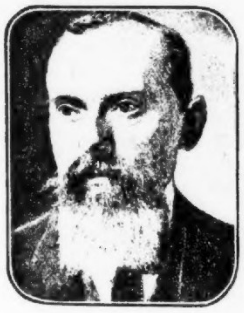
But at the final session in Aubervilliers, the con-

« Grèves révolutionnaires en France » — George Andreytchine
One Big Union Monthly, Vol. 2, n° 7, juillet 1920

dier were arrested, one in Marseilles, the other in Decazeville. The latter was forcibly taken from the hands of the police by 500 railroad and metal workers and so far has not been rearrested. Some solidarity! Then Henri Sirolle, railroaders' delegate to the C. G. T., was arrested. After these, Fernand Loriot, another prominent militant of the Teachers' Federation and leader of the communist wing of the Socialist party; after Loriot, Fellow Worker Edmond Leveque, secretary of the Railroad Workers' Federation; after him Delagrange, Courage, Briard; then the arm of "law and order" reached for Comrade Boris Souvarine, editor of the "Bulletin Communiste," who, together with Monatte and Loriot, form the executive secretariat of the Third International in France; and on May 19 our brave Fellow Worker Monmousseau joined the above-mentioned in the famous "Sante" prison.

A Parallel Between France and Russia

The capitalist press informs us that seventeen arrested "bolsheviki" will be tried under the infamous anarchist laws, commonly called "lois scelerates" (rascally laws), in spite of the fact that only a few of the accused are avowed anarchists and they are arrested for activities in connection with a purely syndicalist manifestation. Sirolle, Leveque, Sigrand and Chaverot, all railroaders, are members of the Anarchist Federation and the **"Libertaire"** group; Monatte, Monmousseau, Delagrange, Totti, Rey, Briand, Verdier and Midol are "pure" syndicalists; Loriot and Souvarine — Marxians. But what does it matter to the hysterical bourgeoisie? It wants to get rid of them, and one law is just as good to them as another. But we are sure that the French proletariat will have more to say about the imprisoned fellow workers than the capitalist judges.



FERNAND LORIOT
Teachers Federation;
Born 1870.

In the summer of 1917 the Russian Bolsheviki made a great demonstration in Petrograd against the useless and criminal murder of Russian soldiers by Kerensky and Kornilov, at the behest of the Allies' agents in Russia. The same day, on the insistence of the same Allied agents, Kerensky and the "comrades" Mensheviki issued an order for the arrest of Lenin, Trotzky, Mme. Kollontay, Kamenev, Zinoviev and others.

EDMOND LEVEQUE
Secretary Railroad Federation,
Born 1884.

Zinoviev and Lenin went into hiding, while the rest were immured in the infamous Czarist fortress Sts. Peter and Paul. But they did not stay there very long. Two months after their release, Trotsky, Kamenev and Mme. Kollontay were at the head of the first workers' government.

The French bourgeoisie is in the same boat as the Russan was at that time. The productive and distributive organs of France have long ago ceased to function normally. Persecution of militant revolutionaries will not make them run any better. The capitalist system is completely discredited. Its end is nearer than we suspect. But a conscious revolutionary action and organization is necessary to accomplish the great transformation—the revolution.

Monatte and his fellow workers have looked into that matter and they have devoted not in vain their lives to the education and organization of the workers in industrial unions. They have well merited the love and devotion of the working class the world over. We wish them freedom and realization of their ideal, which is, as Monatte puts it: **"Syndicalization of industry; the factories to the workers, the land to the peasants!"**

The next encounter with the bourgeoisie will spell the doom of the rotten and criminal, bloodthirsty capitalist class. The Communist Revolution will succeed, thanks to the ready organization of our fellow workers, the syndicalists.

A Capitalist's Prayer

By L. Sweet

God, give me priests (with pay decreased)
Who shield each worthy grafter,
And workers keep in silent sleep
By talks on the hereafter.

Pray soldiers give who on hardtack live,
With purpose but to fight,
Whose willing hands serve all commands,
And murder, their delight.

Let children read and backward speed
In imitation schools,
Taught by stale minds on crooked spines,
And economic fools.

Pray workers send, world without end,
Whose work is all they know,
With wooden brains on husky frames
That never on strike go.

Who can contrive to keep alive
On less than living wages,
And all their days can sing my praise,
Shut up in filthy cages.

Then all good slaves, beyond their graves,
May join the angels' cheer;
But as for me—well, let me see—
I'll take my pleasures here.